

Idaho Currents

Annual Energy Conference Features Building Science Expert

One of the world's foremost experts in the field of building science will be the featured speaker during the annual Idaho Building Efficiency Conference March 5-6 in Boise.

John Tooley is known for his visionary ideas, pioneering spirit, and many achievements in building science. Besides being a recipient of the Florida Governor's Energy Award, Tooley has also been honored with the Energy Efficient Building Association's coveted Joule Award for his innovative contributions to the building industry.

Florida Power and Light also recognized Tooley for his valuable contributions to its Duct Leakage Program, which received a National Energy Award. He has also authored and co-authored numerous scientific papers and articles about making heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems more efficient.

The conference will be conducted at the Washington Group International Auditorium, 720 Park Boulevard. Sessions will begin at 8:30 a.m. on March 5 and at 8 a.m. on March 6. Discussion topics include a technical issues panel, multifamily housing, new technologies, and Energy Star® Northwest.

The conference is open to anyone, including builders, architects, real estate agents, lenders, contractors, and home buyers. Six continuing education credits will be given to architects and real estate agents.

"This conference is for anyone who is interested in building with comfort, health and efficiency," says Ken Eklund, principal energy specialist with the Idaho Office of Energy Resources.

Conference sponsors include the Idaho Office of Energy Resources, Intermountain Gas Company, Idaho Power, Energy Star Northwest, and the Northwest Building Efficiency Center.

Registration fee of \$85 includes lunch both days and refreshment breaks.

Online registration is available at www.idwr.idaho.gov/energy or at the door. For more information about the conference, or to register, call Marla Loftis with the Office of Energy Resources at 208-287-4900.

Energy Conference Speakers

Ken Eklund – Office of Energy Resources
Tim O'Leary – Office of Energy Resources
Tony Zornik – Office of Energy Resources
Anne Brink – NW Energy Efficiency Alliance
John Tooley – Advanced Energy Corporation
Tad Duby – On Point
Ival Turner – Western Heating and AC
Shaun Hassel – Advanced Energy

How Will The New Energy Law Affect You?

By Bryan Dooley, Idaho Press Tribune

The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, signed into law Dec. 19, will potentially change the cars we drive, the gas we pump and the appliances we use.

While the effects of many of its provisions will not be fully felt for years, the 822-page act is intended to reduce energy consumption in a number of ways – most notably by increasing automobile fuel economy standards, encouraging development of alternative fuels and energy sources and more efficient household appliances, and effectively phasing out incandescent light bulbs by 2014.

Congressional supporters of the bill estimate it will save Americans \$400 billion through 2030, in addition to cutting carbon emissions. If funded, experts say, investment into researching new technologies could provide further benefits.

The bill received widespread bipartisan support in Congress, although some controversial provisions were removed as it was handed back and forth between the House of Representatives and Senate.

Republican Sens. Mike Crapo and Larry Craig, as well as Rep. Mike Simpson, voted for its approval.

“This bipartisan energy bill takes over where the 2005 Energy Bill left off, and is the most significant energy efficiency and conservation bill in this nation’s history,” Craig said after the bill’s signing.

Rep. Bill Sali opposed the bill, objecting to several earmarks and saying it did not do enough to cut gasoline or heating costs or reduce dependence on foreign oil.

“The underlying concern that we had is, how will this bill lower consumer energy costs. Sali was concerned that it will not,” spokesman Wayne Hoffman said. The bottom line is, there is some good in the bill but it falls short of our expectations. Americans want Congress to find ways to lower gas prices, and this bill could actually cause them to rise.”

Pressure at the pump

The bill’s centerpiece is a provision requiring automobile manufacturers to increase fleet wide fuel economy standards to 35 miles per gallon between 2011 and 2020 – the first such increase for passenger vehicles since 1975.

Congressional leaders estimate the boost will reduce oil consumption by 2 million barrels of crude per day by 2025 – more than the U.S. imported from Saudi Arabia in 2007.

The process could prove difficult for manufacturers, but consumers will ultimately benefit, AAA Idaho spokesman Dave Carlson said.

Carlson said manufacturers have for years been able to “cheat the system” when it comes to Corporate Average Fuel Economy – or CAFE – standards, partially because of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency criteria.

Carlson said trucks and sport-utility vehicles often weren’t fully considered, and the old standards effectively assumed every car traveled at the same speed and did not use air conditioning.

“They’re going to have to test vehicles in more real-world situations,” he said. “It’s going to be a tough standard but one that’s more honest for consumers.”

Carlson also praised the act’s provision promoting the development, manufacture and use of hybrid and electric vehicles. The act offers tax incentives to encourage development of plug-in hybrids.

“The hybrid promotion definitely makes sense,” he said. “If necessity is the mother of invention, a little cash incentive on the side definitely doesn’t hurt. ... Motorists are now looking at ways to reduce fuel costs,” and the new development should provide new options.

The act also calls for annual production of renewable fuels to increase to 36 billion gallons by 2022.

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"It's probably a good idea, but there's not going to be any easy answer there," Carlson said, citing the cost of transporting ethanol to be mixed by distributors and the rise in food prices caused by increased use of corn in biofuel production.

Carlson said a move toward cellulosic ethanol, which is produced from non-food plants, could help to reduce the strain.

Ethanol also has a lower energy content than fossil fuel, and at a high enough ratio fuel economy decreases, he said, so the mixture must be carefully considered.

Lights out for many bulbs

Another of the act's major provisions calls for higher efficiency standards for light bulbs, which will effectively phase out most types of incandescent bulbs between 2012 and 2014.

Congressional supporters say this will reduce carbon emissions equivalent to the output of 24 new coal power plants.

Many major energy providers, including Idaho Power, have long supported the replacement of incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs.

Idaho Power estimates the bulbs are on average 75 percent more efficient, and can last up to 10 times longer than incandescent bulbs.

"All major utilities in Idaho support cash incentives to promote the use of CFLs," said Paul Kjellander, administrator of the Idaho Office of Energy Resources. His cabinet-level position was created in September of 2007, and his office works directly under Gov. Butch Otter.

"I think (phasing out incandescent bulbs) will have a positive effect in the long run," he said. "We're shifting away from the light bulb that was invented by (Thomas) Edison, how many years ago, toward a new technological standard."

Kjellander said incentives offered by Idaho utilities have reduced the cost of CFL bulbs to \$1 in many

locations. The bulbs were on sale for 99 cents each Friday at a Nampa supermarket. The savings provided by their increased efficiency more than makes up for the higher cost over incandescent bulbs, Kjellander said. A typical incandescent bulb costs 30 to 40 cents.

He added that utilities generally support the fluorescent bulbs – and energy efficiency in general – because lower power consumption means less demand for new generating facilities. And the cost of those projects is ultimately passed on to consumers.

Studies show the new-generation bulbs are more efficient in almost all applications. But when used in fixtures that tend to be turned on and off frequently and for a short duration, such as in a garage door opener, the bulbs tend to fail much more rapidly, Kjellander said.

The act calls for increased efficiency for other household appliances as well, including dishwashers and clothes washers, refrigerators and freezers. Dishwashers will be required to decrease water usage by 20 percent, and laundry machines by 40 percent.

"In an area like Idaho where clearly water is a fought-after resource, anything you can do to improve efficiency is obviously great," Kjellander said.

However, he said, the success of such measures will ultimately depend on cost effectiveness.

"If the new appliances cost \$3,000 or \$4,000 more up-front, people are going to have to look at it and make a decision," he said. "If it doesn't pencil out, people aren't going to make a change in their behavior. If it pencils out, people will decide with their pocketbooks."

Kjellander said it's too early to judge what long-term effects the act will have because money for various measures has not yet been allocated.

"The appropriations measure will determine the real value of the language," he said. "We'll just have to wait and see."

Editor's note: This article was reprinted from the February 17, 2008, issue of the Idaho Press-Tribune and used with permission.

USDA Value Added Producer Grant Application Deadline Nears

Idaho agricultural producers need to keep the March 31 filing deadline in mind if they plan to submit an application for the Value Added Producer Grant program through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Business Programs.

The grants are targeted to independent producers, agricultural producer groups, farmer or rancher cooperatives, and majority-controlled producer-based business ventures for either planning activities or working capital.

Information on the Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Improvement Program grants, also through the USDA Rural Development program, will be issued later this spring.

"Idahoans have a history of submitting strong applications that compete well for these USDA Rural Development Grants," says Idaho Senator Mike Crapo, a ranking member on the Senate Agriculture Committee's subcommittee on Rural Revitalization, Conservation, Forestry and Credit. "Last year, Idaho ranked eighth in the nation for the number of projects that were funded."

One of the eligible purposes of the grant is to conduct planning activities (feasibility study, business plan, etc.) for the development of on-farm production of renewable energy, such as wind or biodiesel.

Key points of the 2008 VAPG program:

- \$18.4 million in competitive grant funds are available for grant awards in FY 2008;
- The maximum grant awards are \$100,000 for planning grants and \$200,000 for working capital grants;
- All VAPG funds are required to be matched by an equal amount of funds from the applicant or third party.

The primary objective is to help eligible groups develop business plans for viable marketing opportunities and develop strategies to create marketing opportunities. VAPG grants will facilitate greater participation in emerging markets and new markets for value added products.

"Our goal is to develop and submit as many quality VAPG applications from Idaho as possible," says Daryl Moser, director of the Rural Development Business Program in Boise.

Draft applications should be submitted to USDA business program specialists by March 14 to allow time for review and response in time to meet the final deadline. Applicants are encouraged to work with the business program specialist in the following areas:

- Kerrie Hurd, Boise, 208-378-5623, ext. 2
- Tim Wheeler, Boise, 208-378-5623, ext. 4
- Margaret Hair, Coeur d'Alene, 208-762-4939, ext. 117
- Randy Wheatley, Twin Falls, 208-734-1324, ext. 121

Paper applications must be postmarked and mailed, shipped, or sent overnight no later than March 31. Electronic applications must be submitted through the grants website and must also be received by March 31. Paper applications are encouraged, rather than electronic applications.

For more information about the VAPG program, contact Randy Wheatley, Idaho's Value Added Producer Grant coordinator at 208-734-1324, extension 121.



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